

Story 1986 (1992 Tape 8)

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Two Sisters: Crazy Girl and Clever Girl

Once there was and once there was not¹ in the old times two sisters who lived with their very old mother. They used to share the household and farming chores. One of these girls was crazy, but the other was very clever. One day Clever Girl said to her sister, “You go out to the plain and work in our field today while I give our mother a bath.” But Crazy Girl refused to go to their field, for she wanted to stay home that day. They argued about this for a few minutes, and then Clever Girl agreed to work in the field and allow her sister to bathe their mother.

After Clever Girl had departed, Crazy Girl filled a cauldron with water and lighted a fire beneath it. After the water had begun to

¹This is the opening line of a very popular tekerleme, a nonsense jingle used as a formulaic opening for a Turkish tale. This rimed list of paradoxes and non sequiturs amuses the audience, alerts it to the fact that a story is about to begin, and sharpens the wits of its members sufficiently to allow them to understand the narration.

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boil, Crazy Girl undressed her mother and placed her in the bathtub. Then she poured several pails of boiling water over the old woman. The mother was too old and feeble to survive such treatment, and so she died sitting in the tub. But Crazy Girl did not realize that her mother was dead. She asked her mother to raise her arms so that she could lift the old woman out of the bathtub, but the mother remained motionless. The daughter then dragged her out of the tub, dressed her, and put her to bed. When Crazy Girl returned to the bedroom two hours later to see if her mother needed anything, she saw that the old woman's eyes were closed. She said to herself, "Oh, I gave her such a nice warm bath that she has relaxed completely and fallen asleep."

Later Clever Girl returned from working in their field and asked her sister, "Did you give our mother a bath?"

Crazy Girl replied, "Oh, yes. I gave her a nice warm bath, which she liked so very much that she fell asleep right in the bathtub."

When Clever Girl went into the bedroom to see their mother, she found the old woman lifeless. She said to Crazy Girl, "Alas, Sister! Our mother is dead! We must go to the cemetery, dig a grave there, and bury her in it." Taking a shovel with them, they went to the cemetery, dug a hole there, and placed the body of their mother in it.

As the two sisters were returning home, they saw an old woman in a small fig tree picking its fruit. Crazy Girl said to the old

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woman, "How did you come back to life again so soon and reach this tree so soon to pick figs?" She then pulled the old lady out of the tree. Her body struck the ground so hard that the shock killed that old woman whom they did not even know.

Clever Girl then said, "Oh, my sister, look at what you have done! If the villagers discover what has happened, they will kill us! Come! Hurry! There is nothing now for us to do but take her to the cemetery and bury her too in our mother's grave." And that is exactly what they did. They buried two women in the same grave.

A few days later Clever Girl again asked her sister to work in their field. She herself would stay home and bake bread for them.

But again Crazy Girl refused to work in their field. She said, "I can bake bread and cakes far better than you can." Once more Clever Girl went to do the field work and Crazy Girl remained at home. She prepared a large trough of dough, but she poured too much water into the mixture, and so the dough was soft, and when it was touched, it shook like yoghurt. She then took that dough outside and dumped it in their underground oven.²

²In rural Turkey there are ovens of two types. One is built into the large chimney alongside the fireplace or in a small brick structure in the yard. It is called firin. The other type is a hole dug into the ground beside the house and covered with a piece of sheet metal or a thin slab of stone. This type is called tandır.

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When Clever Girl returned, she could smell bread baking. She went to the underground oven. When she opened the cover of that oven and looked inside, she found that the whole oven was filled with a mass of soft dough that shook like yoghurt. Going into the house, she said to her sister, "I have had enough of your craziness. Let us divide what our parents left us and then separate."

The most valuable property that they had, besides their house and their field, was a herd of oxen which their father had left to them when he had died a year or two earlier. Crazy Girl now said, "When the oxen come home this evening from grazing, the ones which enter the newer stable will be mine, and the ones which enter the older stable will be yours." Clever Girl agreed to this proposal.

When the sun began to set, the oxen returned from the pasture. Most of these oxen were familiar with the older stable, for they had slept in it for a long while. When they returned from the pasture that night, they quite naturally entered their usual sleeping place. Because of that, Clever Girl received almost the entire herd. A lame ox limped along well behind the rest of the herd, and when it finally appeared, it was forced to enter the newer stable. That was the only ox that Crazy Girl got.

Crazy Girl decided to take her lame ox to market and sell it. Along the way to the market, Crazy Girl saw a lizard in her path.

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When the lizard raised its head and looked directly at her, Crazy Girl asked, "Are you interested in buying my ox?" The lizard said nothing, but it kept nodding its head, and the girl thought that that was its way of saying, "Yes." Then she asked the lizard, "Will you give me ten gold coins for my ox?" Again the lizard nodded and nodded. Crazy Girl then said, "All right! The ox is yours. Now I am going to tie the ox to this tree beside us, but five days from now I shall return to this tree to collect my ten gold coins from you. Be sure to bring the money here at that time!"

When Crazy Girl had returned to her village, she said to her sister, "I have sold my ox already."

Clever Girl asked, "To whom did you sell it?"

"I sold it to a lizard."

When Clever Girl heard this, she was furious with her sister. She asked Crazy Girl, "What do you think a lizard would do with an

Five days later Crazy Girl went to the tree where she had left her ox. The ox was gone, and the lizard, which owed her ten golden coins, was nowhere to be seen. Angry at that dishonest lizard, she decided to dig around that area to find it. She went home, got a mattock and a shovel, and began digging all around the tree. Within a few minutes her mattock struck a buried pot which was full of gold.

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Taking a handful of gold liras, she returned home and showed them to her sister. "The lizard paid what it owed me," she said.

Clever Girl was surprised to see the gold and she asked, "Where did you find this gold?"

"I told you that I had sold my ox to a lizard. When it did not come to our meeting place today to pay me, I started to dig up that area in search of that dishonest buyer. I never found the lizard, but I did find a buried pot of gold. I took a handful of that gold and left the rest there."

Her sister said, "You must not tell anyone else about this. Let us go to that place with a large sack, a pickax, and a shovel so that we can discover how much more gold the lizard may have buried there."

Riding on one of Clever Girl's oxen, they went to the place where Crazy Girl said she had found the gold. Clever Girl was amazed to find that there was indeed a whole pot of gold liras there and that there was really no need to dig. They put all of the gold in their sack and then loaded the sack on the back of the ox. Clever Girl said to her sister, "Go straight home with this load of gold. Do not let anyone touch the sack, and if anyone should ask what it contains, do not tell him what it really is."

As Crazy Girl was leading the ox home, she met a policeman. She said to him, "Do not touch my sack!" But the man knew that the

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girl was crazy, and just to tease her, he poked the sack with his police club. Picking up two stones, Crazy Girl struck the policeman on the head with them, killing the man. She thought that she was following her sister's order not to let anyone touch the bag of gold. When the policeman did touch that bag, she felt that he should be punished. She dragged the dead body to an old and unused well. Throwing the dead policeman into that well, she continued on home.

When she arrived there, she was asked by Clever Girl, "Did anyone see you on your way home? Did anyone touch the sack of gold?"

"Yes, I met a policeman along the way, and I warned him not to touch the sack, but he poked it with his stick anyway. You warned me not to let anyone touch the sack, but the policeman touched it even though I told him not to do so. To punish him for doing that, I hit him on the head with two stones, and he died as a result of those blows. Then I threw his body into an old abandoned well."

"Alas, O Allah, alas!" exclaimed Clever Girl, deeply worried. "What can we do now? I am sure that people will start searching for that policeman. What can we tell them if they ask us about him?" She then took to the roof of their house a bagful of raisins and roasted chickpeas. She poured these bits of food from the bag, scattering them over the ground below. She then said to her sister, "Look at this! What

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an unusual day this is! Raisins and roasted chickpeas have fallen from the sky today!” She knew that her sister would report this unusual event to the authorities when they came to question her. Then Clever Girl asked, “Where is the well into which you threw the dead policeman?”

When she learned the location of that well, Clever Girl slipped away from the house without telling her sister that she was going. She slaughtered a ram and took it to the well. Removing the body of the policeman from the well, she replaced it with the carcass of the ram. She then dug a hole some distance away from the well and buried the body of the policeman there.

In the meantime, a group of policemen led by the muhtar³ were searching for the missing policeman. When they arrived at the sisters’ home, they questioned Crazy Girl. “A policeman is missing from our village. Do you know where he might be?”

She smiled broadly and answered, “Yahu!⁴ I killed that policeman with two stones and threw his body in an old well.”

“When did you kill him?” they asked.

³The muhtar is the headman of a village. He is elected to that post.

⁴An affirmative interjection, like “Uh-huh!”

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“I killed him on the day that raisins and roasted chickpeas fell from the sky.”

Then the muhtar interrupted, saying to the group of police officers, “Do not take this girl too seriously, for she is crazy.”

Crazy Girl then led the search team to the well. They pulled up the carcass of the ram from that well. When Crazy Girl saw the ram, she said, “O Allah, Allah! Look at this monster! Down in this well he grew horns!”

The muhtar said, “Now you can see for yourselves! I told you that this girl was crazy!” The police now believed what the muhtar had said, and they departed.

Clever Girl was very tired of helping and protecting her mad sister. She said, “I am going to move to some other place and find work there.”

Crazy Girl responded, “Wherever you go, I shall go with you!” Clever Girl really had no choice in this matter. There was no relative to care for her sister, and she could not very well leave her helpless sister there alone. The two therefore moved to another village, where Clever Girl was hired as a servant by a priest. The sisters lived in the servants’ section of the priest’s home.

Clever Girl tried hard to prevent her sister from doing anything offensive in the priest’s home. Knowing what a large appetite her sister

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had, Clever Girl said to her. “Do not eat too much at the dinner table. When you have eaten as much as you should, I shall stare at you to warn you not to take any more food.”

That evening at dinner everyone had just started to eat when Clever Girl just happened to glance in the direction of her sister. Thinking that this was a signal to her, Crazy Girl dropped her fork and spoon and would not take another bite during the rest of the meal, even though all of the others continued to eat.

When they went to bed later that evening, Crazy Girl began to cry, “Ay, ay, ay!” Her sister asked, “What is wrong now? Why are you crying?”

Crazy Girl said, “I am crying because I am hungry.”

Clever Girl then said, “The priest hid the pan of leftover macaroni under his bed. Go quietly and get the pan and eat some of the macaroni, but do not awaken the priest while you are doing so.”

Crazy Girl went very quietly and pulled the pan from beneath the priest’s bed. She took a large spoonful and began chewing it loudly with her mouth partly open—hart, hart, hart.⁵ Hearing this sound, the priest thought that it was being made by the cat. Half awake, he said, “Pist! Pist!” to drive the cat away. Crazy Girl finished eating all of the macaroni, and returned to her bed.

⁵Onomatopoeia for the sound of chewing.

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She had been there for only a little while, however, when she again began to cry, “Ay! Ay! Ay!”

“Now what is the matter?” asked Clever Girl.

“I can’t sleep because I have to go to urinate.”

Annoyed, Clever Girl answered, “Well, go out and urinate!”

Crazy Girl left their bedroom, but in the dark she could not find the bathroom. She finally found the priest’s boots and urinated in them. She then returned to bed.

It was not very long, however, before she again began to cry, “Ay! Ay! Ay!”

Very impatient with her sister, Clever Girl asked, “Now what can the trouble be?”

“I have to go to the bathroom again, but this time I have to defecate.”

“Well, then, go out and take care of your needs!” said the other girl.

Still unable to locate the bathroom in the dark, Crazy Girl defecated in the priest’s hat.

When Crazy Girl returned to bed, her sister asked her, “Did you manage to find the bathroom?”

“No, the house is now so dark that I could not find it either time. I urinated in the priest’s boots, and I defecated in his hat.”

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When Clever Girl heard this, she became alarmed. "Get out of bed and get dressed," she said. "We must leave here at once! When the priest discovers in the morning what you have done, he may kill us!" Gathering their belongings, they started out of the house. Directing her sister how to go, Clever Girl said, "Take the middle door." Misunderstanding this order, Crazy Girl removed the door from its hinges, put it on her back, and began running along behind her sister.

When Clever Girl looked around behind her, she was startled to see her sister carrying the door. "Stop! Stop!" she said angrily. "Why are you taking a door with you?"

"When we were leaving the house, you told me to take the middle door. I did just what you told me to do. Why are you angry?"

They continued on their journey. After they had walked and walked, they came to a creek. Placing the door on the creek, Crazy Girl walked on it to the other side, where she pulled it out of the water. When her sister wanted to use the door to cross the creek, Crazy Girl said, "No! I carried this door on my back the whole distance we have come. You never offered to help me carry it, and so I am not going to let you use it!" But after awhile she changed her mind and permitted her sister to cross on the door.

Again they walked and walked, but as they did so, they grew very tired. When they came to a large tree, they decided to rest for

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awhile. In order to protect themselves from wild animals and any bandits that might be in that area, they decided to climb to the top of the tree and sleep there. Crazy Girl carried the door to the treetop where they placed it across two branches to make a flat place on which to sleep.

Just by coincidence the padishah and his family had come to that place on the same day for a picnic. In the shade of the great tree in which the sisters were sleeping, servants of the padishah spread carpets on the ground and unpacked the food that had been brought for that occasion. At that same time Crazy Girl again felt an urge to urinate. Her sister warned her, “Be very careful and cause your urine to sprinkle down in small amounts so that the people below will suppose it to be rain.”

When the padishah felt something wet on his face, he said, “This is strange. It is a beautiful sunny day, and yet it feels as if raindrops are falling from the sky.”

Soon afterwards Crazy Girl again needed a bathroom. She said, “I cannot help it. I must defecate.”

This time Clever Girl said, “Try to relieve yourself in very small particles so that it will seem like the droppings of birds nested in this tree.”

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But of course Crazy Girl was much larger than the average bird. When her dung began to fall, the padishah said, “Alas, O Allah, alas! There must be an anka⁶ nesting in this tree!”

Delicious aromas from the food of the royal picnic drifted steadily up to the top of the great tree. After awhile they made Crazy Girl so hungry that she could wait no longer to eat. Grabbing the door, she flung it downward. The door struck large branches of the tree as it fell, creating noises almost as loud as thunder. Terrified, the padishah, his family, and his attendants fled wildly from that place, leaving all of their food behind them. The two sisters descended at once and began eating that food greedily.

After the panic of the padishah’s party had subsided somewhat, the ruler sent one of his servants to investigate the source of the loud noises that had frightened them. When Crazy Girl saw that servant approaching, she took out her pocketknife and pretended to be sharpening her tongue with it. When the servant observed this, he asked, “Who are you, and what are you doing?”

Crazy Girl answered, “I am sharpening my tongue so that I can have clearer speech when I talk with my master.”

⁶One of the giant Middle Eastern mythical birds, like the roc, the simurgh, and the phoenix.

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The servant asked, "Could you sharpen my tongue that way too?"

"Of course I can," answered Crazy Girl, but instead of doing that, she cut out his tongue completely.

The servant returned at once to the padishah, but he could not talk without a tongue. Confused, the padishah said, "O Allah, what happened to this man?" He then sent another servant to investigate the source of the terrifying noises. But that second servant returned in the same condition, as did a third servant sent later. After that, the padishah, his family, and his attendants abandoned the idea of recovering any of their food and returned to the palace.⁷

⁷A tale as long as this demands some conclusion. There is no resolution of the adventures of the two principal characters.